
Introduction to NEWS

for users of MS-DOS and UNIX systems

Chris Rusbridge, University of Dundee

Outline

- **What is USENET NEWS**
- **How is it structured?**
- **Netiquette**
- **News readers**
- **Brief exploration**

References

- **Zen and the Art of the Internet
(Kehoe, 1992)**
- **The Whole Internet: User's Guide
and Catalog (Krol, O'Reilly 1992,
ISBN 1565920252)**

What is NEWS?

- NOT mailing list
- NOT bulletin board
- completely distributed
- completely anarchic
- completely self-regulating
- 5% gold, 95% dross
- absolutely irreplaceable

What is USENET

- **NOT an organisation**
- **NOT a democracy**
- **NOT fair**
- **NOT a right**
- **NOT a public utility**
- **NOT a commercial network**
- **NOT the Internet**
- **NOT software**
- **The set of sites on many different networks that co-operate to exchange NEWS articles**

Amazing statistics

- **20,000 articles per day**
- **50 MBytes per day**
- **estimated 2 million readers**
- **estimated 70,000 sites**

Controlling chaos

- **First line: site systems managers**
- **Second line: existing readers**
- **Flames**

How NEWS is organised

- hierarchies of groups (e.g. sci.*)
- groups of articles (e.g. sci.physics)
- 1,000 to 1,500 groups
- subscribe to individual groups of interest
- groups may be global or regional or local
- articles on same topic in group form a thread
- thread is original posting plus responses

Groups

alt	alternative, bizarre or new groups (*)
bionet	groups for biologists, particularly geneticists
bit	selection of BITnet mailing lists
biz	discussions related to business; commercial postings allowed
comp	computer science and related topics
gnu	GNU software
ieee	discussions on IEEE
k12	for schools
news	NEWS network itself
rec	hobbies, recreation, arts (*)
sci	scientific research & applications
soc	social, political issues
talk	formless debate (*)
vmsnet	DECnet and related

misc	none of the above (NB misc.jobs and misc.forsale)
(*)	Not currently offered at Dundee

Netiquette 1

- **Read new users groups**
- **Don't add new groups**
- **Read Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) before posting question**
- **To contact a person, use email**
- **Use reply (goes via email) rather than follow-up (goes via NEWS), unless of wide interest**
- **Use meaningful subject (title) for new postings**

- **use minimum quoting techniques in reply or follow-up to give context**
- **use *.test groups for tests!**

Netiquette 2

- . What you write becomes public**
- . Reflects on Dundee University as well as you**
- . Very easy to offend someone**
- . Don't send abusive, harassing or bigoted messages**
- . Be very careful with irony or sarcasm**
- . DON'T SHOUT**
- . Don't respond in anger**

- **Re-read before you send:
will you regret it in the
morning?**

Netiquette 3

Body language: smiley faces

- : -)** **sarcastic or joking statement**
- : - (** **frown: upset or depressed**
- ; -)** **wink: sarcastic or flirtatious remark**
- : - >** **biting sarcasm**
- : - #** **My lips are sealed**
- % - < | >** **drunk with laughter**
- Etc.**

NEWS readers

- Old readers: rn, vn
- Threaded readers: nn, tin, trn
- X-based readers: xrn
- PC readers: trumpet, WinQVTnet